

***Carex foenea* Willd.**  
bronze sedge  
Cyperaceae (Sedge Family)

**Status:** State Threatened

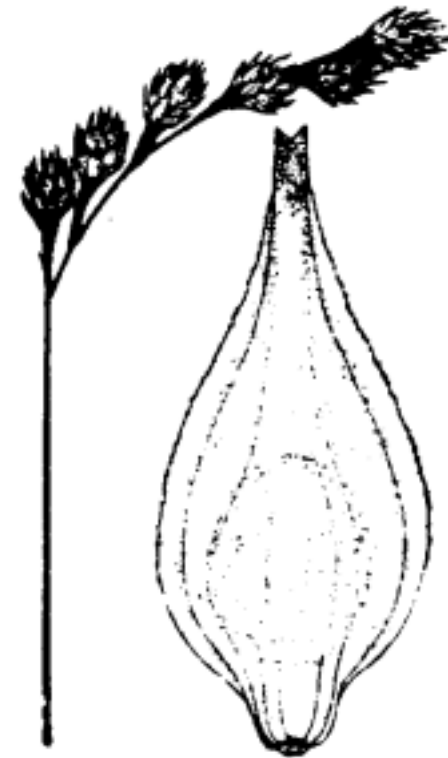
**Rank:** G5S1

**General Description:** Adapted from Hitchcock et al. (1969): A perennial sedge that is densely tufted, lacks creeping rhizomes, is 12 to 32 in. (30 to 80 cm) tall and lacks blade-bearing leaves at its base. The leaves are all borne on the lower half of the stem, are much shorter than the stems, flat or nearly so, and mostly 1/16 to 1/4 in. (2 to 5 mm) wide. There are 3 to 8 spikes bearing both staminate and pistillate flowers. The spikes are 1/4 to 1 in. (6 to 25 mm) long, pale greenish or tan, borne in a loose, commonly flexuous inflorescence that may be interrupted, and the two lowest internodes are collectively 1/4 to 1 1/4 in. (10 to 35 mm) long. The bracts are sheathless, short and inconspicuous, or the lowest one is somewhat bristly and prolonged but still shorter than the inflorescence. The pistillate scales are nearly or fully as long and wide as the perigynia, largely a thin, translucent membrane except for the firmer mid-rib, and tan. The perigynia is planoconvex, wing-margined and minutely toothed toward the apex, mostly 1/8 to 1/4 in. (3 1/2 to 5 mm) long and 1/16 in. (1 1/2 to 2 1/2 mm) wide, about 8-to 14-nerved dorsally and often longitudinally more or less wrinkled or ribbed-sulcate. The ventral nerves of the perigynia are similar to the dorsal ones or fewer and fainter, pale greenish or tan at least toward the apex, often darker and more blackish toward the base, tapering to a flattened, often ill-defined, obliquely cleft or minutely bidentate beak, the distal 1/64 in. (1/4 to 1/2 mm) of which is often more slender, marginless, and entire. There are two stigmas. The achene is lenticular, 1/16 in. (1 1/2 to 2 mm) long and usually 1/16 in. (1 1/4 to 1 1/2 mm) wide.

**Identification Tips:** *Carex foenea* is most closely related to *C. xerantica*. These species can be distinguished by their inflorescences and perigynia. The inflorescence of *C. foenea* is loose and commonly flexuous and its perigynia are looser, not closely appressed, mostly 1/8 to 1/4 in. (3 1/2 to 5 mm) long, and often notably darkened below the middle. The inflorescence of *C. xerantica* is stiff and its perigynia are more or less closely appressed, mostly 1/8 to 1/4 in. (4 1/2 to 7 mm) long, and not notably darkened below. A technical key is needed for identification

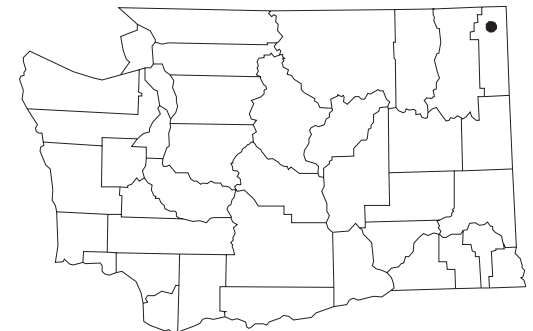
**Phenology:** Flowers from May to August.

***Carex foenea***  
bronze sedge



© 2002 by Flora of North America Association. Illustration by Susan A. Reznicek

Known distribution of  
*Carex foenea*  
in Washington



● Current (1980+)  
○ Historic (older than 1980)

***Carex foenea***  
bronze sedge



***Carex foenea***  
bronze sedge

**Range:** This species is found from Labrador to Connecticut, west to the Yukon, southeast British Columbia, and western Montana, and has been seen in northeastern Idaho. In Washington, *C. foenea* has been found in Pend Oreille County.

**Habitat:** Although *Carex foenea* has a wide ecological amplitude (from dry to moist areas and from plains to montane areas) throughout its large range, in Washington it has been seen only in standing water or on very moist ground near lakeshores and open areas. Associated species include field horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*), one-side winter-green (*Pyrola secunda*), large-leaved avens (*Geum macrophyllum*), tall manna grass (*Glyceria elata*), slim-head manna grass (*Glyceria leptostachya*), bentgrass (*Agrostis* sp.), stalk-grain sedge (*Carex stipata*), softleaf sedge (*Carex disperma*), climbing honeysuckle (*Lonicera ciliata*), and Solomon's-plume (*Smilacina* sp.). The elevation of the Washington population is 790 ft (241 m).

**Ecology:** *Carex foenea* tends to grow in tufts or clumps.

**State Status Comments:** This taxon is peripheral in Washington and has been found only in Pend Oreille County.

**Inventory Needs:** Lakeshores in Pend Oreille County should be systematically surveyed for additional populations. Known populations should be revisited.

**Threats and Management Concerns:** Current threats include lakeshore and campground development.

**Comments:** This species is also known as *Carex aenea*, as it is called in *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest* (Hitchcock 1969).

**References:**

Hitchcock, C.L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, J.W. Thompson. 1969. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest Part 1: Vascular Cryptogams, Gymnosperms, and Monocotyledons*. University of Washington Press, Seattle, WA. 914 pp.